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Security Council

Fifty-first Year

Provisional

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Monday, 15 April 1996, 3.30 p.m.
New York

President:	Mr. Somavía	(Chile)
Members:	Botswana	Mr. Nkgowe
	China	Mr. Qin Huasun
	Egypt	Mr. Elaraby
	France	Mr. Dejammet
	Germany	Mr. Eitel
	Guinea-Bissau	Mr. Queta
	Honduras	Mr. Martínez Blanco
	Indonesia	Mr. Wibisono
	Italy	Mr. Terzi di Sant'Agata
	Poland	Mr. Wlosowicz
	Republic of Korea	Mr. Park
	Russian Federation	Mr. Lavrov
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Mr. Gomersall
	United States of America	Mrs. Albright

Agenda

The situation in the occupied Arab territories

Letter dated 10 April 1996 from the Permanent Representative of the United Arab Emirates to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council (S/1996/257)

96-85439 (E)

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The meeting was suspended at 1.30 p.m. and resumed at 3.30 p.m.

The President (*interpretation from Spanish*): The next speaker is the representative of Malaysia. I invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Razali (Malaysia): It is a pleasure to see you presiding over the work of the Council, Sir, whatever the circumstances. You are presiding over a debate on an issue that must command the priority attention of this Council, given recent disturbing developments. If these developments are not comprehensively addressed, they will have serious repercussions further affecting international peace and security. Even if we are uncertain about the effect of the Council's debate today, the Malaysian delegation sees it as a necessary response to the plea made by Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat to this Council to address the policy of blockade and closure being pursued by the Government of Israel, and also to the escalating Israeli military attacks in Lebanon, which have brought death and misery to innocent people and which are playing into the hands of those who oppose reconciliation and stability in the Middle East. The combined effect of Israeli action in Palestine and Lebanon at a time of political volatility in Israel itself has reinforced the position of those exploiters in Israel who want to derail the peace process and of those extremists outside Israel who would like to undermine the fragile foundations of peace in the Middle East.

The Malaysian Government is deeply disturbed by the worsening situation in the Middle East. Like others in the international community, we feel let down that Israel should play into the hands of extremists, allowing events, as if inexorably, to bring everything back to a circle of violence, where, distressingly, both Governments and extremist groups terrorize and maim people to achieve their political ends. The major Powers, including the United States, and important countries of the Middle East must take steps to arrest this slide, which could undo the historic achievements made to this point with courage and sacrifice.

Yasser Arafat took the right step by petitioning this Council for a debate, due to the serious hardships being undergone by Palestinians as a result of the Israeli general security blockade, which is also damaging the nascent Palestinian economy. Given the current structure of the Palestinian economy, any restrictions imposed on the mobility of Palestinians would exacerbate the hardship of the population living in those areas. The Israelis' closure of Palestinian territories has resulted in rampant unemployment and has had an adverse effect on the Palestinians' income derived from agricultural exports.

The harsh measures adopted by the Israeli authorities represent grave violations of the relevant provisions of the Fourth Geneva Convention of 1949. These measures, which include the demolition of homes, the confiscation of land, the expansion of settlements, and severe restrictions on the movement of persons and goods within as well as into and out of the Palestinian territories, are a blatant strangulation of the Palestinian people and their economy. Mounting resentment brings about restiveness and retaliation, producing hotbeds of discord and desperate action.

It would be a fatal mistake if Israeli retaliatory action, as a result of suicide bombings by extremists, were to bring about a serious rift in the joint commitments between Israeli, Palestinian and other Arab leaders, and were to divide Israelis and Palestinians. The continuing support of both the Palestinian and the Israeli peoples is necessary to move the peace process forward.

Only a few months back, the Malaysian delegation joined in the universal acclaim at the signing of the Israeli-Palestinian Agreement. We then envisaged prospects for peace and stability in the Middle East, in particular in the occupied Palestinian territories. Both sides — the Palestinians and the Israelis — had shown their strong commitment to further foster their understanding to work together to achieve peace. Now more than ever, these commitments to peace should not be allowed to be derailed by extremists, or by the temptations of domestic politicking. In the words of the Palestinian leader,

> "Peace ... is not the quest of the Palestinians alone, but is a pressing need and a basic quest for the international community, for Arabs and for Israelis equally."

Malaysia would like to reaffirm our total commitment to and unwavering support for the Palestinian people and its leadership in the attainment of all its inalienable rights, to exercise self-determination and to establish an independent State. We equally support the need for peace and security in Lebanon and an end to the Israeli occupation of southern Lebanon. The Israeli occupation of southern Lebanon not only violates the sovereignty of Lebanon but is becoming militarily indefensible. The way to protect Israeli security is

through a political compact with neighbours, and the integrity of Lebanon must be part of that compact.

At this juncture, when the situation is delicate and fragile, every effort must be made to consolidate the peace process. The continued strangulation of the Palestinians would certainly hamper the course towards peace. The attacks in Lebanon have put Israel on a collision course. The leaders who have been courageous enough to forge a historic breakthrough for peace must not allow extremism or a short-sighted policy to prevail.

The President (*interpretation from Spanish*): I thank the representative of Malaysia for the kind words he addressed to me.

The next speaker is the representative of the Syrian Arab Republic. I invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Hallak (Syrian Arab Republic) (*interpretation from Arabic*): Allow me at the outset to congratulate you, Sir, on your assumption of the presidency of the Council for this month. I am confident that your well-known wisdom and efficiency will enable the Council to make headway. I should like also to express appreciation to your predecessor, His Excellency Ambassador Legwaila J. Legwaila, for the exemplary manner in which he steered the deliberations of the Council last month.

The Security Council is meeting today, at the request of the Arab Group, to consider the tragic situation facing the Palestinian population in the occupied Arab territories.

There is cause for concern in the deterioration of the situation, with Israel's escalation of acts of detention and oppression, confiscation of land, the establishment of settlements, the demolition of houses, the imposition of a siege on the West Bank and Gaza and the total isolation of Jerusalem to persuade the Palestinian population through starvation to accept a *fait accompli*, thus enabling Israel to continue its de facto occupation of the Palestinian territories and its denial of the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people.

Silence on Israel's refusal to implement resolutions of international legality and the deflection of the peace process from its objectives has encouraged Israel to be arrogant and intransigent. This has led to a serious deterioration of the situation and to the expansion and escalation of Israeli aggression in southern Lebanon, targeting civilians in scores of villages and towns as well as Beirut, the capital. As a result of this flagrant aggression, hundreds of thousands of civilians have been displaced and dozens of innocent civilians have been killed or wounded.

Security cannot be achieved unless Israel withdraws from all the occupied territories, and a just and comprehensive peace cannot be achieved by further aggression, by starving the population, by massacres such as that at Al-Ibrahimi Mosque in Hebron, by further aggression against the Lebanese people, by the displacement of hundreds of thousands of people or by the killing of dozens of innocent civilians.

It is high time that the Council shouldered its responsibilities in the face of Israel's persistent refusal to withdraw from the occupied territories. The Council is called upon now more than ever to take a strict and categorical position in order to impose respect for international legality and halt Israel's attempts to sabotage the prospects for a comprehensive, just peace based on Security Council resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973) and 425 (1978) and the principle of land for peace, as well as to enable the Palestinian people to exercise its legitimate rights to return to its homeland, to self-determination, and to establish its own independent State on its national soil with its capital at Al-Quds.

The President (*interpretation from Spanish*): I thank the representative of the Syrian Arab Republic for his kind words addressed to me.

The next speaker is the Acting Chairman of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, His Excellency Mr. Ravan Farhadi, to whom the Council has extended an invitation under rule 39 of its provisional rules of procedure. I invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Farhadi (Afghanistan), Acting Chairman of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People: I take pleasure at the outset in conveying to you, Sir, my congratulations on your accession to the presidency of the Security Council during the month of April. I am sure that under your presidency, with your long experience as a diplomat and your great and memorable experience at the United Nations, the Council will be able to discharge its responsibilities for the maintenance of international peace and security. I should also like to thank most sincerely Ambassador Legwaila of Botswana for discharging with

such great wisdom his responsibilities as President of the Security Council last month.

I am grateful to you, Mr. President, and to the other members of the Security Council for having given me the opportunity, as Acting Chairman of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, to participate in this important debate on the decision by the Israeli Government regarding the blockade and closure of Israeli borders with Palestinian territory. The resulting economic hardships and aggravation of tensions in this area is of great concern to our Committee. The closure has brought about restrictions on freedom of movement within the Palestinian territory. This action by the Government of Israel has made life extremely difficult for the people of the Palestinian territory. This situation may exacerbate difficulties in the relations between Israel and the Palestinian Authority.

The Israeli Government has also stated that it is its intention to take further implacable measures in the occupied Palestinian territory, including Jerusalem. These measures include the further destruction of houses, the confiscation of land, the expansion of settlements and some restrictions on the movement of persons and goods within the Palestinian territory, as well as into and out of the territory.

This Israeli policy has resulted in rapidly escalating hardships for the entire Palestinian population. Uncertain food supplies and massive unemployment have reached crisis levels. Patients and medical staff alike are unable to travel from one area of the West Bank to another to reach hospitals and clinics, even in emergency situations. Education, agriculture and business activity have been severely disrupted. International non-governmental-organization staff, including foreign nationals, have been prohibited from moving between population areas in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. At this time when the services of international non-governmental organizations are desperately needed, they are unable to provide even the most basic services.

It should also be stated that the closure of the border of the West Bank with Jordan and that of the Gaza Strip with Egypt, obstructing the movement of persons and goods, is effectively isolating the Palestinian territory from the neighbouring countries.

The Committee believes that these measures are in violation of the relevant provisions of the Fourth Geneva Convention of 1949, which is applicable to all the territories occupied by Israel in 1967, including Jerusalem, as well as of the relevant Security Council and General Assembly resolutions.

This policy of the Government of Israel totally contradicts the concept of peacemaking on the basis of the agreements that have been reached between the two parties thus far.

The Committee is also of the view that the response to acts of violence committed by some elements should not be directed at the Palestinian people as a whole. It should not undermine and hinder the peace process, the success of which the Committee has striven to ensure, in accordance with the General Assembly's resolutions.

On behalf of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, I call upon the Security Council and the sponsors of the peace process to use their strong influence to persuade the Government of Israel to end its unjust policy of closure of Israeli borders with the Palestinian territory. The international community must also persuade the parties concerned to proceed rapidly with the peace process which they have agreed to pursue together. This the only way that a lasting peace can be achieved in the region.

The Committee is also extremely worried about the negative impact on all Palestinians of the recent armed conflicts and of Israeli shelling and air raids in south Lebanon and in the suburbs of Beirut. This reveals the close relationship between the Palestinian problem and the question of the Middle East, which constitutes the major dimension of the overall situation.

The President (*interpretation from Spanish*): I thank the Acting Chairman of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People for his kind words addressed to me.

The next speaker is Mr. Engin Ansay, Permanent Observer of the Organization of the Islamic Conference to the United Nations, to whom the Council has extended an invitation under Rule 39 of its provisional rules of procedure. I invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Ansay: I thank you, Sir, for the opportunity to address the Security Council once again during your presidency. I wish to speak this afternoon on the situation in the occupied Arab territories.

When I addressed this body a few days ago on another issue, I took the opportunity to congratulate you, Sir, on your election to your high office. Permit me to reiterate my Organization's assurances of its fullest cooperation in the discharge of the important responsibilities you are shouldering this month.

The Middle East peace process, launched about four years ago with the objective of achieving a just and comprehensive solution of the question of Palestine and the related conflict in the Middle East, continues to attract the strong support of the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC). In the year that has passed, the peace process has advanced a few steps forward. The signing of the peace treaty between Jordan and Israel on 26 October 1994 and the signing of the Declaration of Principles in Washington, D.C., on 28 September 1995 have been the high points of these initiatives in this period. I have very happy memories of my association with the process of observing the recent historic elections in Palestine, when the enthusiasm, organizing ability and restraint of the Palestinian people and their leadership won the admiration and congratulations of us all.

Following the withdrawal of Israeli troops from Gaza and Jericho and the assumption by the newly established Palestinian National Authority of its functions, the Palestinians have commenced the process of reconstruction and development. They now have the challenging tasks of reviving and modernizing national institutions, designing and developing both the human and physical infrastructure and rebuilding the economy by revitalizing agriculture, industry, trade and social services, all with extremely limited resources and formidable impediments. But those challenges can not be dealt with freely until such time as all the Palestinian and other Arab territories under illegal Israeli occupation, including the holy city of Al-Quds al-Sharif, are fully restored to the Palestinian people and their sovereignty is once again established over the entirety of what was and is legitimately their land.

Last November, in my intervention during the General Assembly's debate on its agenda item 42, on the question of Palestine, I drew attention to the fact that, with a scarcity of resources, the task of United Nations funds, programmes and agencies in furnishing much-needed humanitarian and technical assistance to the Palestinian people in their reconstruction and development efforts has been difficult enough. What has added to the international community's costs and frustrations is what can only be described as the non-cooperative attitude of the Israeli authorities, whose difficult bureaucratic formalities designed to deal with the population of the occupied areas are continuing to be enforced even after the conclusion of the peace agreements. Similar practices at the hands of Israeli authorities are adversely affecting the promotion of Palestinian trade, especially exports to other countries.

These practices continue to be at variance with the spirit of compromise and cooperation which should characterize all ongoing and future dealings between the Palestinian and Israeli authorities in the implementation of the peace agreements. Instead, Israel's resort to such drastic actions as the latest fierce aerial attacks on Lebanese territories, including Beirut, causing the displacement and mass exodus of hundreds of thousands of innocent civilians; its bombing even of ambulances; its indiscriminate destruction of civilian property and demolition of Palestinian homes; its decision to freeze the peace negotiations; its continuing occupation of Arab territories in Palestine, Syria and Lebanon; and its frequent closing of borders on the Palestinian population, depriving Palestinians of their livelihood and access to much-needed medical and other essential facilities, are all only hindering peace and throwing the peace process into further jeopardy.

I should add here that the Organization of the Islamic Conference does not condone terrorism of any kind, and it has always supported proposals for the containment of terrorism in all international forums.

We in the OIC want to continue to encourage and support the ongoing peace process, but I must point out that this cannot be accomplished without a visible change of attitudes and practices. Time is of the essence; the time is now.

We would like to see without further delay the implementation of United Nations resolutions, particularly resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973) and 425 (1978), and Israel's withdrawal from all the Palestinian and Arab territories, including Al-Quds al-Sharif, the occupied Lebanese territories and the occupied Syrian Golan. We particularly demand an immediate halt to the Israeli military actions in Lebanon.

I should also add that, in the spirit of the peace process, Israel needs to be persuaded not to carry out any geographic or demographic change in holy Jerusalem during the interim phase which may jeop. lize the outcome of negotiations on the final status of the city, and to stop Jewish settlement in the occupied Palestine and Arab territories, including Al-Quds al-Sharif.

Once again, on this occasion and on behalf of the Secretary General of the OIC, His Excellency Mr. Algabid, whose statement on the latest crisis was issued this morning, I bring to the Council a message of peace, a call for reason and an appeal for the extension of every support to the Palestinian people to help alleviate its sufferings from long years of occupation, repression and the denial of the exercise of their inalienable, natural human rights. Towards this goal, the resolve behind the ongoing peace process must be maintained, and the pace of its progress must be accelerated through the united efforts of the international community in assisting the Palestinian National Authority to gain fuller and firmer control over all its nation-building tasks so that the Palestinian people may re-emerge as a proud, productive, independent, sovereign nation with its own flag flying over all of its territory, including Al-Quds al-Sharif, and having full status as a State Member of the United Nations.

In the current peace process the prospects of achieving peace and prosperity for all countries of the Middle East region, including Israel, are within sight. It is incumbent upon the international community, as represented in this great world Organization, to ensure that the opportunity is taken and not lost.

The President (*interpretation from Spanish*): I thank Mr. Ansay for the kind words he addressed to me.

The next speaker is the representative of Saudi Arabia. I invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Allagany (Saudi Arabia) *(interpretation from Arabic)*: I am pleased to congratulate you, Sir, on your assumption of the presidency of the Security Council for this month. We are confident that your wisdom and efficiency will lead the Council to success.

Saudi Arabia is following attentively the development of the peace process in the Middle East. We cannot fail to express our deep concern at the events the occupied Palestinian territories, including Al-Quds al-Sharif, and the Lebanese Republic are going through.

In recent weeks, Israel, the occupying Power, has continued to take very harsh measures against the Palestinian people in the Palestinian territories. These measures have included the confiscation of land, the expansion of settlements, the imposition of extremely harsh restrictions on movement, and a full siege and strangulation of the Palestinian people.

Israel justifies all these measures by its commitment to establish safe passages between Gaza and Jericho, and between Gaza and the West Bank, during, respectively, the first and second phases of the implementation of the agreements between the two parties. The Israeli policy currently being implemented, which is unprecedented since the 1967 occupation, has made life unbearable and has paralysed daily life on absolutely every level.

In talking of the elements of the peace process and ensuring its success, we are inevitably led to reaffirm that the international community must commit itself to finding a permanent, just and comprehensive settlement for Palestine.

The closure of the borders of the West Bank and Gaza with Jordan and Egypt, including the prohibition of the movement of people and of goods that are imported legally by Palestinian merchants, the severing of links between the Palestinian territories and the outside world, and the imposition of actual isolation on Palestine all contravene agreements that have been concluded and have nothing to do with the concept of peacemaking.

Saudi Arabia, which has supported the peace process since it was launched in Madrid in 1991, is in full solidarity with its Arab brothers. This Israeli siege of the Palestinian people through closure and blockade is tantamount to a declaration of war on the Palestinian people, who have opted for peace.

Peace today is not only a Palestinian demand; it has become an international and Arab demand as well.

The question of Al-Quds al-Sharif is at the core of the Israeli-Arab conflict. Therefore, no permanent peace in the Middle East can be achieved without a just solution to this question: a solution which takes into account internationally binding resolutions, particularly Security Council resolutions 242 (1967), which stipulates the withdrawal of Israel from the territories that were occupied in 1967, and 252 (1968), relating to Al-Quds al-Sharif. Israel should undertake not to impose any demographic change that could alter the status of Jerusalem or affect the forthcoming negotiations on its final status. Al-Quds al-Sharif is the first of the two holy qiblas and the third holy shrine for all the world's Muslims; there can be no peace until all their rights with respect to the Holy City are restored.

We expect the sponsors of the peace process — the United States of America and the Russian Federation —

to ensure that the Israeli Government honours its commitments, and to desist from putting obstacles in the way of peace, particularly in view of the early progress in the peace process. We cannot forget that progress in the peace process always coincides with recognition of the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people. Now we can see the results of ignoring those rights.

Tangible progress must be made in negotiations on the Lebanese and Syrian tracks. By increasing its representation in bilateral negotiations, and thus proving its seriousness, Syria has gone a very long way towards creating an atmosphere conducive to reaching a settlement in its dispute with Israel.

As far as the Lebanese track is concerned, what we see today in the constant bombardment of Lebanese villages is a flagrant breach of Lebanese sovereignty and of Security Council resolution 425 (1978), which clearly stipulates that Israeli forces must withdraw unconditionally and immediately from Lebanese territory.

The question of Palestine is not confined to the early transfer of authority from Israeli military and civil authorities to the Palestinian Authority. The essence of the question of Palestine includes the return of displaced persons and refugees to their homeland; the removal from Palestinian territory of Israeli settlements — which now number 152, of which 124 are in the West Bank and 28 in the Gaza Strip; the return of East Jerusalem to Arab sovereignty; and the ability of the Palestinian people to exercise full sovereignty over its land.

Our question today is whether the human conscience will be awakened and whether the leaders of Israel will learn from the wisdom of history that peace is necessary for them and for others. They could do this by seriously and faithfully demonstrating their intention to find a comprehensive and just solution that would ensure the withdrawal of Israel from all the Palestinian and Arab-occupied lands — including Al-Quds al-Sharif — in accordance with legal international resolutions, and by understanding the meaning of peaceful coexistence based on a balance of interests between rivals, so that the Middle East can enjoy peace, prosperity and stability.

The President (*interpretation from Spanish*): I thank the representative of Saudi Arabia for the kind words he addressed to me.

The next speaker is the representative of Turkey. I invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Tanç (Turkey): Over the past few years we have witnessed remarkable developments in the Middle East. The bold steps taken on the difficult road towards peace have aroused expectations and excitement. Turkey wholeheartedly supports the Middle East peace process. At this significant point in time, Turkey attaches the highest importance to preservation of the momentum towards achieving peace, security, stability and prosperity in the Middle East.

At present, terrorism is the biggest danger to the peace process. The struggle against terrorism is the legitimate right of the countries of the region. Terrorism must be eliminated in order for the quest for peace and stability in the Middle East to succeed. At the same time, it is necessary that no harm should come to innocent people while this struggle is being carried out, and that the fight against terrorist acts remain within the bounds of lawfulness.

Another crucial element is the support being given by the Palestinian people to the peace process. Palestinians have recently established, through a democratic election, a legitimate administration. In order to maintain their support, it is important that the economic hardships encountered by the Palestinian people as a result of the measures taken by Israel be eliminated without delay, because improvement in economic conditions is one of the most important factors in ensuring the attachment of people to peace.

The punishment of the Palestinian people as a whole is not acceptable. We are concerned that this will weaken the support of Palestinians for the peace process.

Having strongly supported the peace process from the very beginning, Turkey believes that in fighting terrorism it is necessary for all the countries in the region to cooperate and to stand in solidarity with each other.

The President (*interpretation from Spanish*): The next speaker is the representative of Jordan. I invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Abu-Nimah (Jordan) (*interpretation from Arabic*): Allow me at the outset, Sir, to congratulate you on your assumption of the presidency of the Security

Council for this month. There is no doubt that, with your broad experience and well-known wisdom, you will successfully guide the work of the Council and lead it to the desired outcome. I also thank and congratulate Ambassador Legwaila Joseph Legwaila of Botswana, on his successful presidency of the Council last month.

The Security Council is meeting today to discuss a very important question, which deserves close attention by us all and treatment commensurate with the seriousness of the situation and its potential for danger. In addition to its being an issue which threatens the peace process in the Middle East, jeopardizing its continuation and success, this situation wrongs and oppresses all Palestinians in the Palestinian territories. It constitutes collective punishment far beyond what is needed to fight violence and terrorism and to maintain security.

Our interest in the continuation of the peace process on the Palestinian-Israeli track and its extension to other tracks, and in peace, security and safety for all the peoples of the region, including the Israeli people, is the basis of our participation in today's debate.

At the same time, we fully realize the need for measures to curb the violence and terrorism which have been, and continue to be strongly condemned by my Government no matter where it is perpetrated, or by whom. I must recall that for decades Jordan has taken a firm and principled position against all forms of terrorism. Jordan has cooperated with all efforts to counter terrorism, most recently the Sharm El Sheikh Summit and the Washington follow-up meeting. It has done so because terrorism and violence threaten the peace process and destabilize the region as a whole. They also impede the establishment of economic, social and political institutions, and their ability to develop our region.

We acknowledge all this, but we also realize that action to deal with this phenomenon must be based on the rule of law and must be in accordance with justice and objectivity. That cannot be achieved through measures contrary to those principles or by applying double standards. In dealing with security issues and with violence and terrorism, Governments must adopt no measures that fail to take into account legal and international commitments and the social and practical difficulties arising from these measures, or the negative repercussions for security generated by this fear and frustration. That would impede the positive efforts made towards development and bring back the atmosphere of tension, conflict and extremism which we hope that we have put behind us once and for all.

I do not want to deal with the deteriorating situation in Lebanon, as the Council will discuss that question later this evening. However, we believe that what is happening in Lebanon is cause for deep concern, and that it is part of an attack against the peace process that could threaten the peace and security of the region. We will express our position on that issue at the appropriate time.

We in Jordan are deeply concerned about Israel's actions against the Palestinian people in the Palestinian territories, about which the Council has heard a report from the representative of Palestine. Such actions including the bombing of homes, the confiscation of land, and the imposition of restrictions on the movement of people and goods within the Palestinian territories, which is tantamount to the full siege and starvation of the Palestinian people — innocent people who have nothing to do with terrorism and violence. Such practices run counter to right, justice and law, and are thus in violation of the Fourth Geneva Convention of 1949, which applies to all territories occupied by Israel since 1967, including Jerusalem. They also represent a violation of Security Council resolutions. Above all, they are incompatible with, and do not lead to the creation of, a positive atmosphere for the implementation of the accords concluded between Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization. They also weaken the support given to the peace process by the people of the region. We should urgently try to stop this development. We should stand against it in the future in order to clear the atmosphere, reinforce mutual trust and create the climate necessary to continue the positive dialogue between all parties to achieve the desired peace.

While we hope that the Security Council and the international community as a whole will work seriously to reverse the course of events in the Palestinian territories and to prompt Israel to desist from all its unfair practices against the Palestinian people, and to reconsider its policy in its entirety, we also hope that the international community will stand by the peace process in order to enable the Palestinian National Authority and the Palestinian people to achieve their goals and to get beyond this difficult stage.

We call upon the Council to create the proper atmosphere and to urge the parties concerned to return to the negotiating table, to implement the agreements concluded between the Israeli Government and the

Palestinian Authority and to work towards the negotiations on the final stage, to push the peace process in general towards the objective of comprehensive peace, to establish security and to find radical solutions to the conflict from which the region has suffered for so many decades.

We are confident that the adoption of responsible, moderate and just measures and the continuation of dialogue will enable us to what we all aspire to — namely, narrow the circle of violence and to establish peace, security, safety and tranquillity for all the peoples of the region.

The President *(interpretation from Spanish)*: I thank the representative of Jordan for the kind words he addressed to me.

The next speaker is the representative of the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya. I invite him to take a place at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Azwai (Libyan Arab Jamahiriya) *(interpretation from Arabic)*: Allow me at the outset to congratulate you, Sir, on your assumption of the presidency of the Security Council for this month. I am confident that your personal qualities and your well- known efficiency and experience will enable you to steer the proceedings of the Council to the desired success. At the same time, I should like to pay tribute to your predecessor, the Permanent Representative of Botswana, for his successful conduct of the affairs of the Council last month.

Today the Security Council is meeting to discuss the tragedy that the Palestinian people has been experiencing in the occupied territories as a result of the campaign of blockade, starvation and collective punishment waged against them by the Israelis. These tragic events are unfolding for the whole world to see and hear, in violation of all international norms and covenants.

The Israelis have interpreted the Summit of Sharm El Sheikh as support for their oppressive and suppressive actions against the Palestinian people, who dare to reject occupation and resist the occupiers, using whatever resources they have available, from stones to suicidal operations.

The Israeli Government perpetrates the most heinous crimes against the Palestinians, convinced that this will help it get re-elected and will do away with resistance to its repellant occupation.

Of course, reneging on promises is nothing new for the Israelis, and their lack of respect for international legal decisions is also customary. Scores of resolutions have been adopted calling on them to withdraw from the occupied territories, to observe international treaties in dealing with the inhabitants of these territories and to allow the refugees to return to their homes, among many other things. But the Israelis have never complied.

We have every right to ask why the Israelis insist on the non-implementation of Security Council resolutions, and why the Security Council is unable to impose respect for its resolutions? Why is it that no single resolution against Israel has been adopted under Chapter VII of the Charter despite the fact that most Israeli crimes fall under that Chapter? Why does the whole world raise the roof over resistance to Israel's occupation, while never raising a finger when Israelis take the most terrible measures against the Arabs in Palestine or in Lebanon? The Israelis often invoke security to justify the blockade and the collective punishment, and we would really like to know what kind of security they are talking about now. Are they talking about the security of their occupying forces or the security of their illegal settlements? Yet what danger is posed by a woman in labour that makes them prevent her from reaching the hospital, thus forcing her to give birth before the eyes of laughing occupation soldiers, and later to see her twins die of cold, out in the open, near a roadblock?

We have all heard the Prime Minister of Israel declare that he would not sacrifice security for peace. Does this not prove that the Israelis do not believe in peace, but work for the imposition of capitulation? Who are opposed to genuine — just, comprehensive peace — the Arabs or the Israelis? And why have the Israelis not asked themselves why they have not enjoyed peace since the establishment of their entity in 1948? Do they not know that the policy of suppression, oppression and occupation of land by force will never lead to peace? And however weak the Arabs are, however great their differences and however strong the American support the Israelis receive, they will not be able to impose a *fait accompli*. This policy has been tried before and has never succeeded: the will of the people will never be defeated because it is derived from the will of God. Force may kill and destroy, but it will never prevent the wronged from avenging themselves against the oppressors, even if it means blowing themselves up with their oppressors.

The Israelis and their allies will be gravely mistaken if they think that normalization of relations with Arab

countries, embracing their Heads of State and reciprocal visits will succeed in forcing the Arab nation to surrender. These are illusions. The peoples will never surrender or be brought to their knees. History has seen hordes of Tatars, Crusaders and the armies of Western colonialist empires invade the Arab nation by force, and for approximately the same objectives, but all of them were routed, and the Arab nation survived.

These are not mere words. These are facts recorded in ancient and modern history, and they bear repeating. Blood that is shed can be washed away only by blood. Violence and persecution are the weapons of the foolish. However, we in the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya were not taken by surprise by these events. We have pointed out before, that genuine, just, and comprehensive peace will not be achieved by the imposition of agreements of capitulation and surrender.

We have repeatedly stated that only in a non-racial democracy can Arabs and Jews live together, in a country that lives in peace and believes in equality and in the future — a country that can come to be only under the kind of regime that led to peace in South Africa.

We have also repeatedly stated that the double standards applied by the Security Council, under the pressure of the United States and its allies, whenever something affects the Israelis, are the wrong policy. This policy is destructive to the credibility of the United Nations, and of the Security Council in particular. Our conviction is based on long and repeated experiences relating to the Arab-Israeli conflict, the repeated acts of aggression against Lebanon and the violation of its territorial integrity.

This conviction is also born of the repeated aggressions against the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya by the United States of America. Today we mark the anniversary of the 1986 United States aggression against Libyan cities, carried out with the assistance of Margaret Thatcher, then Prime Minister of Britain. That aggression targeted Tripoli and Benghazi, and used hundreds of American military aircraft to bombard civilian targets, including the home of Colonel Muammar Al-Qadhafi, the leader of the revolution, in an unprecedented and despicable attempt to assassinate the leader of a country and his family before the eyes of the whole world.

As we all know, the whole world condemned that barbaric aggression. But the Security Council alone was unable to adopt a resolution condemning the aggression, because the aggressor used its veto power. The Security Council also ignored General Assembly resolution 41/38, which instructs the Council to remain seized of the question of the United States aggression.

Despite all these unjust practices by the Israelis and the United States, we will not lose hope that the Security Council will play its vital role in the maintenance of international peace and security. We will spare no effort to observe the principles of the United Nations in cooperation with all peace-loving nations, until the world is free of the rule of force, which should be replaced by the rule of law so that truth may triumph and falsehood perish.

"For falsehood is (by its nature) bound to perish." *(The Holy Koran, XVII:81)*

The President (*interpretation from Spanish*): I thank the representative of the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya for the kind words he addressed to me.

The next speaker is the representative of Tunisia. I invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Abdellah (Tunisia) (*interpretation from Arabic*): We believe that today's formal Security Council meeting and open debate is of crucial importance, because it concerns the serious situation in the occupied Arab territories.

For some weeks now, the Israeli authorities have been taking extremely serious measures against the Palestinian people. These measures have consisted of imposing restrictions on the freedom of movement of persons and goods in the Palestinian territories, isolating Palestinian regions from each other and preventing any interaction between Palestinian towns and villages, and breaking the continuity of Palestinian territory under Palestinian authority, between Gaza and the West Bank and other Palestinian territories, and its links with the outside world.

Israel has also closed its borders to Palestinian goods from Gaza and the West Bank, and has prevented the entrance of Israeli goods into Palestinian regions. It has closed the borders between the West Bank and Jordan, and between Gaza and Egypt. These steps, which have been described in detail in the letter from President Yasser Arafat addressed to the Secretary-General, constitute a flagrant violation of the Fourth Geneva

Convention of 1949, applicable to all territories occupied by Israel since 1967, including Al-Quds. They also constitute a violation of the international resolutions adopted by the Security Council and the General Assembly, as well as a serious violation of the agreements concluded between the Government of Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization in Oslo and Washington, and the subsequent Taba and Washington agreements between Israel and the Palestinian Authority.

Apart from the illegal, illegitimate and heinous nature of these actions by Israel, we all are aware of the interaction between the activities and economic interests of Israel and the Palestinian territories and the precarious nature of the Palestinian economy. That is why Israel's steps constitute reprisals against the Palestinian people as a whole. These people are being suffocated in the economic and social spheres. They are isolated from the outside world and live in an almost ghetto-like situation. They suffer terribly: women, children and the elderly are threatened with death by starvation and disease. It is not difficult, therefore, to foresee the negative impact on, and the serious consequences for, peace in the Middle East and the resulting threat to that process. The enemies of peace find in this tumultuous situation a pretext for carrying out their plans.

We recognize the right of each State to security and stability and to reassure its population. This is a legitimate goal. We condemned recent attacks, including the massacre in Haram al-Ibrahimi and Haram Al-Quds al-Sharif, and we also denounced, along with the Israeli people, the assassination of the Prime Minister of Israel, Mr. Yitzhak Rabin. At the same time, we say that violence cannot be countered with violence. One cannot use as a pretext the actions of a group in order to suppress and starve an entire people, as is the case of the Palestinian people. They too have the right to enjoy security and to live in dignity, like all other peoples of the region. There is no equality or justice in punishing an entire people and making them pay for the actions of a few.

The Summit of Peacemakers at Sharm El Sheikh reaffirmed the importance of the speedy achievement of peace in the Middle East and stressed the need to promote the peace process and to eliminate the obstacles impeding that process and the dangers threatening it. However, the measures now being taken in the Palestinian territories do not serve that end — quite the contrary. They fuel violence and counter-violence, and the consequence will be to feed hatred and hinder the peace efforts of peace-loving countries and peoples within and outside the region.

Tunisia has supported every stage of the peace process, and we continue to do so because of our unwavering commitment to the principles of justice, peace and self-determination, as well as to international law. We call here upon the Israeli authorities to rescind the measures taken against the Palestinian people and to put an end to practices that limit their freedom and threaten their security and their basic rights. Likewise, Tunisia demands that Israel respect its commitments, in keeping with the agreements concluded with the Palestinians, including withdrawal from Palestinian territories according to the agreed timetable.

The Palestinian people has chosen the path of peace. It has made peace its fundamental goal, as it demonstrated by supporting President Arafat and the Palestinian Authority in the recent elections. If Israel really wants peace — a peace based on justice, a lasting peace and one that commands respect and commitment — it must comply with its commitments and logically give up policies that run counter to the objective sought.

We appeal to the United States and to the Russian Federation, as co-sponsors of the peace process, to intervene quickly to stop the serious escalation that threatens the peace process and undermines the goal of the Summit of Peacemakers held at Sharm El Sheikh: to assure the pursuit of the process by giving it new momentum to attain the aspirations of the peoples of the region, indeed, the aspirations of the international community as a whole.

We also appeal to donor countries to assist the Palestinian people in the current crisis and to meet their commitments towards the Palestinian Authority to relieve the suffering of the Palestinian people and to rebuild their devastated economy.

We call upon Israel to recognize the failure of force in the settlement of conflicts. We ask them to give up this cycle of violence and counter-violence, and its consequences for the peace process, and to return quickly to the path of negotiations.

We urgently appeal to the Security Council, which bears primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security, to act quickly to put an end to the violence and to call for restraint and the resumption of dialogue to attain a just, lasting and comprehensive peace in the Middle East.

The President *(interpretation from Spanish)*: I thank the representative of Tunisia for the kind words he addressed to me.

The next speaker is the representative of Colombia. I invite him to take a seat at the side of the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. García (Colombia) *(interpretation from Spanish)*: Allow me first of all on behalf of my delegation to congratulate you, Sir, on your assumption of the presidency of the Council for the month of April. We are certain that your experience and professional skills will ensure the success of the work of the Council this month. We also wish through you to congratulate the Permanent Representative of Botswana on the way in which he conducted the affairs of the Council during the month of March.

What the international community fervently wishes to see in the Middle East is a just, lasting and comprehensive peace that will guarantee security and stability for all the peoples of the region. To achieve this, it is essential for the agreements that have been concluded and the provisions of United Nations resolutions, including Security Council resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973), 465 (1980) and 478 (1980), to be fully and scrupulously implemented.

We are convinced that, as the Heads of State or Government of the non-aligned countries stated in the final document of the Cartagena summit, the United Nations responsibility in this respect should continue until the Palestinian people can exercise its inalienable right to self-determination, until an independent and sovereign State is established on its national territory and until the refugee problem is resolved in accordance with the relevant United Nations resolutions.

My country has followed with the greatest interest the evolution of the process initiated in Madrid in 1991 with a view to a peaceful and negotiated solution to the conflict in the Middle East.

As we have stated on other occasions, we are convinced that the Declaration of Principles signed in Washington on 13 September 1993, the Interim Agreement on the West Bank and the Gaza Strip of 20 September 1995 and the establishment of the Palestinian National Authority constitute progress in the efforts of Palestinians and Israelis in the search for peace — progress which must be maintained and encouraged.

There can be no question that to maintain support for the Declaration of Principles and the Interim Agreement, the economic and social development of the occupied Palestinian territories must be guaranteed and promoted. In this respect, it is appropriate to recall what was stated by the Secretary-General in his report on the work of the Organization, published in August 1995:

> "The peace process needs broad public support and without a visible improvement in the living conditions of the Palestinians this support will remain fragile. In this connection, I have to draw attention to the damaging effects which closures of the occupied territories by Israel have had on the nascent Palestinian economy." *(A/50/1, para. 742)*

The Secretary-General added that

> "In its effort to support the Arab-Israeli peace process, the United Nations has placed special emphasis on sustainable economic and social development in the occupied territories." *(ibid., para. 743)*.

The measures adopted by Israel in recent weeks point in the opposite direction. In any case, but above all in view of the characteristics of the Palestinian situation, measures that affect property and restrict the movement of persons and goods, such as the ones adopted by Israel, have a serious impact on the population, the economy and the peace process, and violate United Nations resolutions and the agreements between Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO).

We concur with what was stated by President Arafat in his communication of 1 April to the Secretary-General that:

> "Peace ... is not the quest of the Palestinians alone but is a pressing need and a basic quest for the international community, for Arabs and for Israelis equally." *(S/1996/233, annex)*

That is why we join with other delegations that have called for an end to the measures imposed by Israel and for full compliance with the agreements signed between Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization.

The President *(interpretation from Spanish)*: I thank the representative of Colombia for the kind words he addressed to me.

The next speaker is the representative of Cuba. I invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Parrilla (Cuba) (*interpretation from Spanish*): Allow me to congratulate you, Sir, and to wish you every success during your presidency. Allow me also to express my thanks for the contribution made by the presidency of Botswana. I pay a special tribute to our colleague, Ambassador Legwaila.

Barely 11 months ago the Security Council met to consider the tension created by the confiscation by the Government of Israel of Palestinian lands situated in East Jerusalem.

At that time we warned that if unlawful practices in contravention of international law against the Palestinian people continued, in flagrant violation of the Palestinian people's inalienable right to self-determination and in breach of international instruments and a large number of resolutions of the General Assembly and of this Council itself, and that, if practices aimed at destroying the economic infrastructure of the Palestinian people and at impeding its efforts for peace, reconstruction and development continued, the expectations aroused by the peace agreements would be in jeopardy and the possibility of attaining just and lasting peace in the area would become more remote.

At that time we stated that those circumstances compelled the Security Council, for once, to take firm and serious action and we warned that failing to do so would amount to sending the wrong message, which instead of contributing to the progress of the peace process might damage it, perhaps irreparably. On that occasion it was not possible to adopt the draft resolution prepared by the Arab Group; nor was the Council able to adopt any practical measure whatsoever, paralysed by the veto of the United States.

Today the Council is meeting once again, convened urgently upon the request of the Arab Group to consider new actions that form part of the same hostile policy applied by the occupying Power against the Palestinian people and which continue to endanger the agreement on the Declaration of Principles, its timetable and the peace process as a whole.

The border-closure measures, based on so-called security considerations, the restrictions on the freedom of movement of the Palestinian people in its own territory, the impediments to trade and commerce, the demolition of dwellings, the confiscation of Palestinian lands and the expansion of Israeli settlements in those territories have quite logically caused alarm and have been firmly repudiated by the international community.

We are all aware that this meeting was preceded by consultations during which only one delegation voiced opposition to any action being taken — even in the form of a presidential statement — in response to the events now under our consideration. And that delegation insisted instead on a mere statement to the press. The opposition is isolated, but it does have veto power.

How will the Security Council deal with this situation, which has come about twice in less than a year? What about our speeches, our documents and those hundreds of hours of negotiations on democratization and reform in the United Nations and in the Security Council? How can we explain the gulf dividing all the rhetoric about the new post-cold-war world and the facts of daily life? How can we prevent the double standard from being imposed once again on the Security Council?

The Cuban delegation wishes to affirm once more that the right of the Palestinian people to self-determination, to have its own State, to live in peace, to develop its economy and to build a better future for its children are inalienable rights that cannot be trampled underfoot or be dependent on the wishes of the occupying Power or its protectors.

The international community welcomed the peace agreements hopefully. Today that hope is threatened. The implementation of the Declaration of Principles and the continuation of the negotiations on the status of outstanding issues, including the question of Jerusalem, are in jeopardy. Today the whole of the peace process is threatened by actions that take us further away from a lasting peace for all, one that includes the return of all occupied Arab territories.

What then are the objectives of these actions? Could it be that these actions, using the pretext of terrorism — which deserves our condemnation, and which we resolutely condemn — might also serve to incite the forces that oppose the establishment of a climate of peace between the peoples of Israel and Palestine?

Cuba demands an end to the unlawful actions against the Palestinian nation and calls for compliance with the pertinent resolutions of the General Assembly and of the

Security Council itself. The new escalation of aggression against Lebanon, endangering the physical safety of innocent civilians in that country, has now further compounded the actions aimed at the Palestinian people and is a tragic manifestation of the consequences of Israel's aggressive policy for the peace and security of that part of the world. The Security Council cannot close its eyes and remain impassive in the face of these events. Nor can it permit the imposition of a collaborative silence, which would distance it from its mandate under the Charter of this Organization.

Cuba hopes that the United Nations and the Security Council will fulfil their historic responsibility in respect of the question of Palestine and of peace and security in the Middle East.

The President (*interpretation from Spanish*): I thank the representative of Cuba for his kind words addressed to me. The next speaker is the representative of Pakistan. I invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Kamal (Pakistan): It is with a sense of deep shock and concern that the Government of Pakistan views the recent measures taken by the Israeli authorities against the Palestinian people in the occupied Palestinian territories, including the Holy City of Jerusalem/Al-Quds al-Sharif. The Israeli measures of making Al-Quds al-Sharif off limits to the Palestinian people and of imposing stringent restrictions on their entry into the city have created enormous problems, particularly in view of the special status of the city as the religious, commercial and cultural centre for the Palestinian people.

The complete details, as well as the serious consequences of these measures on the Palestinian people and their economy, have already been described by the Permanent Observer of Palestine. As has been pointed out by Ambassador Nasser Al-Kidwa, these actions are in contravention of the Fourth Geneva Convention of 1949, as well as of the relevant resolutions of the Security Council, the General Assembly and other organs of the United Nations. They also violate the agreements reached with the Palestine Liberation Organization. Furthermore, these measures are particularly disturbing, as they have a direct bearing on the peace process which had been arrived at through bold and courageous initiatives taken earlier.

We fully share the belief that the peace process should lead to the early exercise by the Palestinian people of their right to self-determination through the establishment of an independent homeland. This requires the withdrawal by the Israeli authorities from all the occupied Palestinian and Arab territories, including the Holy City of Al-Quds al-Sharif.

Pakistan's support for the just struggle for the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people is well known. We have consistently stated that Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973) continue to provide a viable and just framework for a durable and comprehensive settlement of the Palestinian question.

It is imperative to maintain the present momentum that has been achieved in the negotiating process. We fully share the expectations of the international community that there should be no delay in the implementation of the agreements and accords concluded so far. The provisions of these agreements and accords should be complied with both in letter and in spirit. We strongly urge the demonstration of the requisite flexibility and accommodation, as well as a sincere commitment to the achievement of a just, lasting and comprehensive peace that will ensure security and stability for all the peoples and States of the Middle East region.

The Government and the people of Pakistan are deeply concerned at the latest policies, practices and actions, which are seriously undermining this peace process. It calls upon the Security Council to take urgent measures to redress the current grave situation, as it imperils the peace of the Holy City of Al-Quds al-Sharif. We firmly believe that the Council has the duty to call upon the Israeli authorities to immediately end these unjust policies and practices and to desist from taking similar measures in future.

I will be addressing the situation in Lebanon separately in the debate which the Security Council will have later today.

The President (*interpretation from Spanish*): The next speaker is the representative of Japan. I invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Owada (Japan): At the 3650th meeting of the Security Council, earlier this month, the delegation of Japan expressed its gratitude to the departing President of the Council, the Permanent Representative of Botswana, for his service, and congratulated you, Sir, on your assumption of the presidency of the Security Council for this month. I would like to add my own words, and to

say how happy I am to see you sitting in that position to preside over this meeting.

In recent years we have witnessed steady progress in the Middle East peace process. This progress has been achieved through the best efforts of the parties directly involved and with the support of many other members of the international community who are committed to the restoration of peace in the Middle East. I am referring in particular to the successful elections held last January for the Palestinian Council; a total of 650 election monitors, including 77 from my own country, participated in the orderly administration of those elections. This is just one example of the efforts which the international community is making to ensure that progress towards stability and prosperity in the Middle East is irreversible.

In the light of that progress, the situation as it is now evolving is all the more disturbing. Japan joins the other countries that have expressed in this Council their grave concern over recent developments in the region. There is a very real danger that the chain reaction triggered by the recent terrorist bombings in Israel, which killed and wounded scores of innocent citizens, could threaten the peace process itself. The vicious circle of terrorism and countermeasures is creating a dangerous situation that could jeopardize the positive developments that have been made in the West Bank and Gaza.

The same applies to the situation in Lebanon. I cannot but express alarm over the recent developments in southern Lebanon, where the attacks on northern Israel by Hezbollah and the counter-attacks on Lebanese soil by Israeli forces, have resulted in a large number of casualties. The plight of innocent citizens cannot but arouse our humanitarian concern.

Japan is deeply concerned that all these developments will be detrimental to the peace process, and calls for all the parties concerned to exercise utmost self-restraint.

There is no question that, in order to prevent further acts of terrorism and to get the peace process back on track, efforts by the parties concerned, with the support of the international community, are of primary importance. It is significant in this regard that the Summit of Peacemakers in the Middle East, which was held in Sharm El Sheikh under the co-sponsorship of Egypt and the United States, condemned terrorism unequivocally. The Summit sent two important messages: that further progress in the peace process is imperative, and that the international community will cooperate to fight terrorism to ensure that such progress is made.

It is thus incumbent upon both the Government of Israel and the Palestinian Authority to discharge their respective responsibilities by taking genuinely effective measures to protect their peoples against terrorist attacks. Those measures must be assisted and supported by the international community, since terrorism, which does not respect national boundaries, can only be suppressed through concerted international cooperation.

The recent events in the Middle East demonstrate yet again that poverty and unemployment provide a fertile breeding ground for terrorism. If we are to bolster the foundations of the peace process and help to build a society that is free of terrorism, it is essential that the economic and social environment of the Palestinian inhabitants of the West Bank and Gaza be improved. Measures to maintain order in the two areas must take due account of the socio-economic realities of the Palestinian inhabitants.

Japan fully understands the need for Israel to have peace and security ensured in the West Bank and Gaza. However, if the economic and social environment in which the Palestinians live continues to deteriorate, with rising levels of unemployment among Palestinian workers and severe shortages of basic commodities, I am afraid that Israel's counter-terrorism measures could very well be self-defeating and could undermine the overall peace process. That is exactly what those who are trying to sabotage the peace process are hoping for.

At the Summit of Peacemakers, Japan announced its decision to provide an assistance package for creating employment, valued at approximately $10 million. It has, in fact, already implemented this assistance, and is ready to participate actively in the subsequent efforts. Thus it welcomed the emergency plan designed to improve the economic situation in the West Bank and Gaza which was announced at the Washington follow-up meeting to the Summit of Peacemakers. It is Japan's earnest hope that the smooth implementation of the Plan will rapidly improve the economic situation in these two areas, and that the parties directly involved will likewise make every good-faith effort to improve the situation.

The peace process that has been pursued so courageously by the parties concerned during the past few years is the only realistic option for bringing to an end, once and for all, the long and tragic history of

conflict in the Middle East. Japan strongly urges both the Government of Israel and the Palestinian Authority to remain firmly committed to the peace process. This will require that they redouble their efforts to build mutual confidence and also proceed with the faithful implementation of the agreement expanding Palestinian interim self-government on schedule. The international community, for its part, must support such efforts by the parties concerned and do its utmost to help create an environment conducive to peace by cooperating actively for the suppression of terrorism and for the improvement of the social and economic conditions of the Palestinian people. Japan will continue to extend its active assistance to the Palestinian people in the conviction that such support will help strengthen the peace process and ultimately contribute to the stability of the entire region.

The President *(interpretation from Spanish):* I thank the representative of Japan for the kind words he addressed to me.

The next speaker is the representative of Algeria. I invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Lamamra (Algeria) (*interpretation from French*): First I wish to congratulate you, warmly, Sir, on your assumption of the presidency of the Security Council. I am convinced that the personal and professional qualities that you have demonstrated in carrying out several successful economic and social initiatives in the United Nations will be equally beneficial to the Council in performing its tasks. I also congratulate your predecessor, Ambassador Legwaila of Botswana, for the wise and effective way he conducted the work of the Council during March.

On 2 April the Permanent Observer Mission of Palestine brought to the Council's attention grave facts relating to what that mission rightly referred to as Israel's

> "siege and strangulation of the Palestinian territory, the Palestinian people and their economy" *(S/1996/235)*.

As early as 21 March the Algerian Government condemned the repressive measures and practices which in nature and scope amounted to a collective punishment imposed by Israel in violation of international humanitarian law and of Israeli-Palestinian agreements. The gravely negative developments since the striking success of the democratic elections to establish the institutions of the Palestinian National Authority have added to the economic and social distress of the Palestinian people caused by cordoning off of the Palestinian territory. Further dangers are inherent in Israel's questioning of key commitments, such as withdrawal from the town of Al-Khalil Hebron, which should have been completed by 28 March, and the beginning of negotiations on the definitive status of the Palestinian territory, including Jerusalem, which it clearly appears will be deferred.

This has created a serious situation, which has the potential to erode the hope that we felt justified in feeling in the peace process, despite the many difficulties. Until now it had seemed possible to overcome such difficulties.

The Group of Arab States called for this formal meeting of the Security Council because it believed in the Council's ability to use its authority to promote respect for international law as the natural support for and prerequisite to a continued peace process in the Middle East. Given the disquieting deterioration of the situation in the territories under the jurisdiction of the Palestinian National Authority, and its incalculable potential consequences, the Council has responsibilities to shoulder and prerogatives to exercise at a time when Israel's deadly acts of aggression against Lebanon threaten the whole region with a dangerous resurgence of the spirit of confrontation to the detriment of the peace process which all parties have agreed to promote, and which the international community is duty-bound to protect.

With your permission, Mr. President, I shall return to Israel's acts of aggression against Lebanon in the debate on Lebanon which the Security Council will hold later today.

The President *(interpretation from Spanish):* I thank the representative of Algeria for the kind words he addressed to me.

The next speaker is the representative of Yemen. I invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Obadi (Yemen) *(interpretation from Arabic):* Allow me first, Sir, to express sincere thanks to you and your friendly delegation, and to the delegations of all members of the Council, for having convened this meeting of the Security Council to discuss the serious situation in the occupied Arab territories, and Israel's continued cordoning off of Palestinian territories.

We pay tribute to the delegations of the non-aligned group for the honourable position on the rights of the Palestinian people that they have taken in all international forums, and in particular in the Security Council. In recent weeks and to this day the Palestinian people have suffered under heinous Israeli measures, consisting of a blockade and siege imposed on the self-governing territory of Palestine. Israel has reoccupied areas from which it had previously withdrawn, and is not complying with its obligation to withdraw from Hebron in accordance with a timetable agreed to in Taba and in Washington.

The continuation of such measures and practices by the Israeli Government threatens efforts to complete the peace process. It also seriously threatens the process itself. The reprisal measures are in contravention of the Geneva Convention of 1949 and agreements between the parties. The only result will be serious damage to the peace process. Israel's blockade of the Palestinian people, its confiscation of land, and the restrictions Israel has imposed on Palestinian towns and villages have paralysed the lives of Palestinians at all levels. They have paralysed the free circulation of persons and goods in the West Bank and between the West Bank and Gaza, which, according to the Declaration of Principles, constitute a single entity.

The blockade policy could lead to a human and economic catastrophe for the Palestinian people, if Israel does not lift the barriers imposed on Palestinian towns and villages. The continuing blockade of the Holy City of Jerusalem is a violation of commitments made in the peace process.

My delegation believes that the Security Council must act. It must call upon the co-sponsors of the peace process and donor States to continue to provide assistance to the Palestinian people, to ensure that the blockade is lifted and to bring about an end to Israeli repression, massive reprisals, confiscation of land and bombing of houses.

The Palestinian people must be given an opportunity to rebuild their economy on a solid basis and ease the economic restrictions that have been imposed on them so that they can create their own democratic institutions and attain a just, lasting and comprehensive peace in the region. Israel must realize that redoubled efforts are necessary to achieve peace and stability in the region, especially as it continues to occupy Arab territories.

Peace will be impossible unless it withdraws from the occupied Arab territories. The latest aggression against Lebanon by Israel will create an obstacle to the peace process and, in addition, could weaken international efforts that have been made to resume the comprehensive peace process in the Middle East.

The bombing of the capital, towns and villages of Lebanon threatens the entire population of that country and constitutes a serious threat to peace and security in Lebanon as well as a violation of human rights.

We declare our solidarity with the fraternal people of Lebanon, and we support its right to defend its territory.

We call upon the Council to exert pressure on Israel to put an end to those measures and to respect the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Lebanon. It must comply with Security Council resolution 425 (1978), and it must withdraw from all Lebanese territory. The Security Council, the sponsors of the peace process and the international community must shoulder their responsibilities and force Israel to resolve all pending issues concerning the Middle East and, in particular, those relating to international legal requirements that Israel withdraw from the Syrian Golan so that a lasting peace can be attained for that region. We reiterate our appeal.

We commend Syria's role in seeking to make a success of the peace process. Yemen reaffirms its commitment to the peace process and to the end of violence. We call upon the Security Council to act quickly to put an end to Israeli practices and policies so that the peace process can attain its goal: the establishment of justice and stability for all peoples of the region.

The President (*interpretation from Spanish*): I thank the representative of Yemen for his kind words addressed to me.

The next speaker is the representative of Morocco. I invite him to take a place at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Snoussi (Morocco) (*interpretation from French*): First of all, the Kingdom of Morocco would like most warmly to congratulate you, Sir, on your assumption of the presidency of the Security Council for this month. We are also very pleased to express our best wishes for success in the performance of your lofty responsibilities. We are confident that your personal and

professional skills will ensure that the activities of the Council under your leadership will be successful.

Furthermore, my delegation takes great pleasure in warmly congratulating Ambassador Legwaila of Botswana for the very wise and skilful way in which he conducted the work of the Council throughout the month of March.

Since the launching of the peace process in the Middle East, the Kingdom of Morocco has watched developments with very great interest, inspired by a tireless resolve to help remove all obstacles that might undermine or endanger it. In this respect, my delegation warmly welcomed the democratic elections that permitted the Palestinian people to elect its representatives, and it hopes that future negotiations on the final status of the questions still outstanding will take place in an atmosphere of good will and constructive dialogue.

In its concern to see that process take place in a calm atmosphere and within the framework of bilateral and multilateral negotiations, my country has spared no effort to bring the points of view of the parties concerned closer together and to promote peacemaking and respect for the legitimate interests of all.

By participating in the Summit of Peacemakers in Sharm El Sheik in March, His Majesty King Hassan II wished to demonstrate the resolve of the Kingdom of Morocco to safeguard the peace process and ensure the desired success.

At the opening of that Summit, convened in such timely fashion by Presidents Clinton and Mubarak, His Majesty the King stated,

> "Our meeting should be a door open to the future and not a door locking out all hope."

Admittedly, betting on peace is a difficult wager, but the results achieved thus far have made the process irreversible. As a result, the partners for peace have no choice but to persevere firmly and resolutely in their historic undertaking in conformity with the commitments signed, in spite of tragedies, acts of violence and despair. This is why we should all take action to prevent terrorists and indiscriminate violence from holding prisoner this peace of the brave, so patiently constructed.

We must also act to keep up the Palestinian people's hopes for and confidence in the peace process, a process which should enable it to exercise its national rights pursuant to international law, including with respect to the city of Al-Quds al-Sharif.

The Palestinian people is experiencing a very critical situation that calls for assistance on a large scale. The situation has been aggravated by recent measures taken against the Palestinian people and which, unfortunately, are reminiscent of the sorry times before the peace process. These measures that we all so profoundly regret have dealt a severe blow to the Palestinian people's socio-economic life and have begun to shake its motivation to move forward. They may also, if they continue, pave the way for a reaction with unfortunate and unforeseeable consequences.

No one can dispute that the positive developments in the peace process depend essentially on improvements in the living conditions of the Palestinian people. Hence, the vital need to provide appropriate assistance to the Palestinian National Authority in the implementation of a programme of economic, social and cultural development and in the strengthening of institutional and socio-economic structures in the embryonic Palestinian entity. By doing this the international community, which has constantly encouraged the peace process, will enable the Palestinians to demonstrate that they were right to opt for peace.

Having said this, there can be no question that the lasting settlement of the Palestinian question can be built only on law, justice and equity. These are also the foundations of the advent of lasting peace also between Syria and Lebanon on the one hand, and Israel, on the other, in order to achieve at last a comprehensive peace based on international law.

The Kingdom of Morocco, which has continually contributed to the building of a just, comprehensive and lasting peace in the Middle East, takes the view that it is essential for the international community to protect the peace process by taking every possible step to put an end to acts of violence and by providing effective political, economic and moral support. The partners for peace deserve our encouragement if we wish them to work for genuine peace, protected against any act and any measure that might undermine it — a peace based on mutual understanding, cooperation, security, dignity and respect for the legitimate rights of all the parties concerned.

The President (*interpretation from Spanish*): I thank the representative of Morocco for his very kind words addressed to me.

The next speaker is the representative of Senegal. I invite him to take a place at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Diagné (Senegal) (*interpretation from French*): Allow me first to convey to you, Sir, my heartfelt congratulations on your assumption of the presidency of the Security Council for the month of April. My congratulations likewise go to your eminent predecessor, Ambassador Legwaila, on the work he did during the month of March.

I should also like to thank the members of the Council for having kindly authorized me to address this meeting, which once again shows how precarious the situation in the Middle East is, and also reflects the determination of the international community to reaffirm, forcefully and with conviction, its concern over the dangers that Israeli practices in the occupied territories pose for the peace process.

The recent decisions taken by the Government of Israel to impose a blockade of the territory of Palestine, both within the territory and between it and the outside world, thus restricting the free movement of persons and goods, amount to a real determination to strangle Palestine, including Jerusalem/Al-Quds al-Sharif, and its entire economy.

As delegations that have preceded me in this discussion have already stressed, eloquently and in detail, it is difficult not to react to these various operations undertaken by Israel, which are intended solely to intimidate, punish and humiliate — to make an entire people pay for the actions, however reprehensible, of a tiny minority of extremists.

The complete closure of Palestinian territory, the interruption in the continuity of that territory, the forcible reoccupation of territories that had just been evacuated, the confiscation of Palestinian lands and the strengthening of the powers of Israeli settlers — not to mention other humiliating acts, such as the destruction of houses and the arbitrary arrest and detention of thousands of Palestinians: all these measures, which we condemn and want stopped, reveal the acute need for a balanced return to a logic of peace, without which no just and lasting solution can prevail in this ravaged land of Palestine, including Jerusalem/Al-Quds al-Sharif.

Guided by this conviction, we wish to take the opportunity of this special meeting of the Security Council to make an urgent appeal to the authorities of Tel Aviv to ask them to return to the path of wisdom and to put an end to their current policies in the occupied territories, including Jerusalem/Al-Quds al-Sharif; to abide scrupulously by the relevant provisions of the Fourth Geneva Convention, applicable to all territories occupied by Israel since 1967, including Jerusalem; to comply with the various resolutions of the Security Council, the General Assembly and other United Nations bodies; and, finally, to give a real chance of success to the ongoing peace process, to which the Israeli and the Palestinian parties have freely committed themselves with the emphatic blessing of the international community.

We believe that the efforts and the sacrifices made by the people of Palestine in its quest for peace, freedom and justice have limits, even if we are firmly convinced that the path to peace is often long, difficult and full of obstacles, particularly in a region as troubled as the Middle East.

My delegation agrees with the comments made here by many participants to the effect that a resumption of the peace process and its consolidation will depend to a large extent on a return to the climate of trust and hope created by the Oslo agreements and by the various international conferences on this subject.

We must now recreate these same conditions by calling upon Israel to demonstrate more restraint in order to put the process back in its true context: the establishment of a just and lasting peace, and, in the long term, the reconciliation of the hearts and minds of all the peoples of the Middle East.

It is important, therefore, that the Government and the people of Israel once again undertake fully to cooperate with the people of Palestine and its representative: the Palestinian Authority and its leader, President Yasser Arafat.

My country, Senegal, and the entire international community are calling for this kind of genuine cooperation, which is the sole guarantee of, and is a prerequisite for, the successful continuation of the peace process, which is in turn the only guarantee of the security and the survival of the countries of the subregion.

In conclusion, I should like to pay sincere tribute to all those in that part of the world who continue, despite the present situation, to believe in and to hope for the

advent of peace. And I pay homage to the memory of those who have died for this great cause.

The President (*interpretation from Spanish*): I thank the representative of Senegal for his kind words addressed to me.

There are no further speakers.

The Security Council has thus concluded the present stage of its consideration of the item on its agenda.

The meeting rose at 5.35 p.m.